

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCS-06 PA-01 SSO-00 HA-05 MCT-01
SY-05 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00 CA-01
L-03 H-01 NEAE-00 /045 W
-----113270 161506Z /42

O 161350Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8046
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TELA VIV IMMEDIATE
USICA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 2824

BEIRUT FOR PAO MALIK

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: CASC, SOPN, SY
SUBJ: US JOURNALIST

1. MICHAEL TANNENBAUM, A YOUNG AMERICAN JOURNALIST WHO SAYS HE REPRESENTS THE KANSAS CITY STAR, THE SAN DIEGO JOURNAL, AND THE NEW LEADER AND IS BASED IN JERUSALEM. TOLE EMBASSY MAY 15 THAT HE WAS THREATENED WITH ARREST BY PLO IN BEIRUT. HE WAS INTERVIEWING MAHMUD LABADI, PLO SPOKESMAN, AND WAS ASKING HIM "SENSITIVE" QUESTIONS ABOUT PLO MILITARY DISPOSITIONS WHEN LABADI ACCUSED HIM OF BEING A SPY SINCE THESE WERE NOT THE QUESTIONS OF A JOURNALIST. TANNENBAUM SAID HE WAS THREATENED WITH ARREST BUT TALKED HIMSELF OUT OF SITUATION. HE WAS THEN ADVISED BY FRIENDS TO GET OUT OF LEBANON AND HE CAME TO SYRIA.

2. TANNENBAUM SAYS HIS LETTERS OF CONFIRMATION FORM THE NEWSPAPERS HE REPRESENTS WERE "STOLEN" OR POSSIBLY LOST AT SYRIAN BORDER. HE WAS GRANTED PERMISSION TO ENTER SYRIA BUT HAS BEEN UNSUCCESSFUL IN GETTING PRESS CARD HERE. HE
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WANTS EMBASSY TO ISSUE LETTER TO MININFO ATTESTING TO HIS BONA FIDES. HE SAID HE WAS WELL AND FAVORABLY KNOWN TO MALIK IN BEIRUT.

3. WE ADVISED TANNENBAUM THAT PLO PROBABLY INFORMED SYRIAN SECURITY OF HIS ACTIVITIES IN LEBANON AND THAT HE SHOULD BE CIRCUMSPECT IN HIS ACTIVITIES HERE. WE SUGGESTED HE

MIGHT FIND BETTER RECEPTION HERE AFTER COOLING OFF PERIOD, BUT TANNENBAUM DECIDED TO STAY IN DAMASCUS FOR PERIOD OF TWO WEEKS. HE ALSO SAID HE WANTED TO PROBE JEWISH AND ALAWITE COMMUNITIES AND TO TRAVEL TO EVERY CORNER OF SYRIA. WE ADVISED AGAINST BOTH PROJECTS DUE TO SYRIAN SENSITIVITIES. TANNENBAUM ALSO SAID THAT SYRIANS "WILL BE VERY UNHAPPY WITH ANYTHING I WRITE."

4. WE ARE VERY CONCERNED FOR TANNENBAUMS'S SECURITY GIVEN HIS APPARENT LACK OF CONCERN AND BELIEF THAT HE CAN PROBE SYRIAN SENSITIVITIES WITH IMPUNITY.

5. REQUEST EMBASSIES' TEL AVIV AND BEIRUT VERIFY TANNENBAUM'S BONA FIDES. WOULD ALSO APPRECIATE ANY COMMENT OR ADVICE DEPARTMENT MAY HAVE ON HANDLING THIS MATTER.
PELLETREAU

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NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: JOURNALISTS, THREATS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978DAMASC02824
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780206-0844
Format: TEL
From: DAMASCUS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780555/aaaabuub.tel
Line Count: 78
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: d154c19c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2681921
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: US JOURNALIST
TAGS: CASC, SOPN, SY, PLO, KANAS CITY STAR, (TANNENBAUM, MICHAEL)
To: STATE BEIRUT
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/d154c19c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014